

The Wounded Healer

INTRODUCTION

In the middle of our convulsive world men and women raise their voices time and again to announce with incredible boldness that we are waiting for a Liberator. We are waiting, they announce, for a Messiah who will free us from hatred and oppression, from racism and war—a Messiah who will let peace and justice take their rightful place.

If the ministry is meant to hold the promise of this Messiah, then whatever we can learn of His coming will give us a deeper understanding of what is called for in ministry today.

How does our Liberator come? I found an old legend in the Talmud which may suggest to us the beginning of an answer:

Rabbi Yoshua ben Levi came upon Elijah the prophet while he was standing at the entrance of Rabbi Simeron ben Yohai's cave . . . He asked Elijah, "When will the Messiah come?" Elijah replied,

"Go and ask him yourself."

"Where is he?"

"Sitting at the gates of the city."

"How shall I know him?"

"He is sitting among the poor covered with wounds. The others unbind all their wounds at the same time and then bind them up again. But he unbinds one at a time and binds it up again, saying to himself, 'Perhaps I shall be needed: if so I must always be ready so as not to delay for a moment.'" (Taken from the tractate Sanhedrin)

The Messiah, the story tells us, is sitting among the poor, binding his wounds one at a time, waiting for the moment when he will be needed. So it is too with the minister. Since it is his task to make visible the first vestiges of liberation for others, he must bind his own wounds carefully in anticipation of the moment when he will be needed. He is called to be the wounded healer, the one who must look after his own wounds but at the same time be prepared to heal the wounds of others.

He is both the wounded minister and the healing minister, two concepts I would like to explore in this last chapter.

I. THE WOUNDED MINISTER

The Talmud story suggests that, because he binds his own wounds one at a time, the Messiah would not have to take time to prepare himself if asked to help someone else. He would be ready to help. Jesus has given this story a new fullness by making his own broken body the way to health, to liberation and new life. Thus like Jesus, he who proclaims liberation is called not only to care for his own wounds and the wounds of

others, but also to make his wounds into a major source of his healing power.

But what are our wounds? They have been spoken about in many ways by many voices. Words such as "alienation," "separation," "isolation" and "loneliness" have been used as the names of our wounded condition. Maybe the word "loneliness" best expresses our immediate experience and therefore most fittingly enables us to understand our brokenness. The loneliness of the minister is especially painful; for over and above his experience as a man in modern society, he feels an added loneliness, resulting from the changing meaning of the ministerial profession itself.

1. Personal loneliness

We live in a society in which loneliness has become one of the most painful human wounds. The growing competition and rivalry which pervade our lives from birth have created in us an acute awareness of our isolation. This awareness has in turn left many with a heightened anxiety and an intense search for the experience of unity and community. It has also led people to ask anew how love, friendship, brotherhood and sisterhood can free them from isolation and offer them a sense of intimacy and belonging. All around us we see the many ways by which the people of the western world are trying to escape this loneliness. Psychotherapy, the many institutes which offer group experiences with verbal and nonverbal communication techniques, summer courses and conferences supported by scholars, trainers and "huggers" where people can share common problems, and the many experiments which seek to create intimate liturgies where peace is not only announced but also felt—these increasingly

popular phenomena are all signs of a painful attempt to break through the immobilizing wall of loneliness.

But the more I think about loneliness, the more I think that the wound of loneliness is like the Grand Canyon—a deep incision in the surface of our existence which has become an inexhaustible source of beauty and self-understanding.

Therefore I would like to voice loudly and clearly what might seem unpopular and maybe even disturbing: The Christian way of life does not take away our loneliness; it protects and cherishes it as a precious gift. Sometimes it seems as if we do everything possible to avoid the painful confrontation with our basic human loneliness, and allow ourselves to be trapped by false gods promising immediate satisfaction and quick relief. But perhaps the painful awareness of loneliness is an invitation to transcend our limitations and look beyond the boundaries of our existence. The awareness of loneliness might be a gift we must protect and guard, because our loneliness reveals to us an inner emptiness that can be destructive when misunderstood, but filled with promise for him who can tolerate its sweet pain.

When we are impatient, when we want to give up our loneliness and try to overcome the separation and incompleteness we feel, too soon, we easily relate to our human world with devastating expectations. We ignore what we already know with a deep-seated, intuitive knowledge—that no love or friendship, no intimate embrace or tender kiss, no community, commune or collective, no man or woman, will ever be able to satisfy our desire to be released from our lonely condition. This truth is so disconcerting and painful that we are more prone to play games with our fantasies than to face the truth of our existence. Thus we keep hoping that one day we will find the man who really under-



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stands our experiences, the woman who will bring peace to our restless life, the job where we can fulfill our potentials, the book which will explain everything, and the place where we can feel at home. Such false hope leads us to make exhausting demands and prepares us for bitterness and dangerous hostility when we start discovering that nobody, and nothing, can live up to our absolutistic expectations.

Many marriages are ruined because neither partner was able to fulfill the often hidden hope that the other would take his or her loneliness away. And many celibates live with the naïve dream that in the intimacy of marriage their loneliness will be taken away.

When the minister lives with these false expectations and illusions he prevents himself from claiming his own loneliness as a source of human understanding, and is unable to offer any real service to the many who do not understand their own suffering.

2. Professional loneliness

The wound of loneliness in the life of the minister hurts all the more, since he not only shares in the human condition of isolation, but also finds that his professional impact on others is diminishing. The minister is called to speak to the ultimate concerns of life: birth and death, union and separation, love and hate. He has an urgent desire to give meaning to people's lives. But he finds himself standing on the edges of events and only reluctantly admitted to the spot where the decisions are made.

In hospitals, where many utter their first cry as well as their last words, ministers are often more tolerated than required. In prisons, where men's desire for liberation and freedom is most painfully felt, a chaplain

feels like a guilty bystander whose words hardly move the wardens. In the cities, where children play between buildings and old people die isolated and forgotten, the protests of priests are hardly taken seriously and their demands hang in the air like rhetorical questions. Many churches decorated with words announcing salvation and new life are often little more than parlors for those who feel quite comfortable in the old life, and who are not likely to let the minister's words change their stone hearts into furnaces where swords can be cast into plowshares, and spears into pruning hooks.

The painful irony is that the minister, who wants to touch the center of men's lives, finds himself on the periphery, often pleading in vain for admission. He never seems to be where the action is, where the plans are made and the strategies discussed. He always seems to arrive at the wrong places at the wrong times with the wrong people, outside the walls of the city when the feast is over, with a few crying women.

A few years ago, when I was chaplain of the Holland-America line, I was standing on the bridge of a huge Dutch ocean liner which was trying to find its way through a thick fog into the port of Rotterdam. The fog was so thick, in fact, that the steersman could not even see the bow of the ship. The captain, carefully listening to a radar station operator who was explaining his position between other ships, walked nervously up and down the bridge and shouted his orders to the steersman. When he suddenly stumbled over me, he blurted out: "God damn it, Father, get out of my way." But when I was ready to run away, filled with feelings of incompetence and guilt, he came back and said: "Why don't you just stay around. This might be the only time I really need you."

There was a time, not too long ago, when we felt like

captains running our own ships with a great sense of power and self-confidence. Now we are standing in the way. That is our lonely position: We are powerless, on the side, liked maybe by a few crew members who swab the decks and goof off to drink a beer with us, but not taken very seriously when the weather is fine.

The wound of our loneliness is indeed deep. Maybe we had forgotten it, since there were so many distractions. But our failure to change the world with our good intentions and sincere actions and our undesired displacement to the edges of life have made us aware that the wound is still there.

So we see how loneliness is the minister's wound not only because he shares in the human condition, but also because of the unique predicament of his profession. It is this wound which he is called to bind with more care and attention than others usually do. For a deep understanding of his own pain makes it possible for him to convert his weakness into strength and to offer his own experience as a source of healing to those who are often lost in the darkness of their own misunderstood sufferings. This is a very hard call, because for a minister who is committed to forming a community of faith, loneliness is a very painful wound which is easily subject to denial and neglect. But once the pain is accepted and understood, a denial is no longer necessary, and ministry can become a healing service.

II. THE HEALING MINISTER

How can wounds become a source of healing? This is a question which requires careful consideration. For when we want to put our wounded selves in the service

of others, we must consider the relationship between our professional and personal lives.

On the one hand, no minister can keep his own experience of life hidden from those he wants to help. Nor should he want to keep it hidden. While a doctor can still be a good doctor even when his private life is severely disrupted, no minister can offer service without a constant and vital acknowledgment of his own experiences. On the other hand, it would be very easy to misuse the concept of the wounded healer by defending a form of spiritual exhibitionism. A minister who talks in the pulpit about his own personal problems is of no help to his congregation, for no suffering human being is helped by someone who tells him that he has the same problems. Remarks such as, "Don't worry because I suffer from the same depression, confusion and anxiety as you do," help no one. This spiritual exhibitionism adds little faith to little faith and creates narrow-mindedness instead of new perspectives. Open wounds stink and do not heal.

Making one's own wounds a source of healing, therefore, does not call for a sharing of superficial personal pains but for a constant willingness to see one's own pain and suffering as rising from the depth of the human condition which all men share.

To some, the concept of the wounded healer might sound morbid and unhealthy. They might feel that the ideal of self-fulfillment is replaced by an ideal of self-castigation, and that pain is romanticized instead of criticized. I would like to show how the idea of the wounded healer does not contradict the concept of self-realization, or self-fulfillment, but deepens and broadens it.

How does healing take place? Many words, such as care and compassion, understanding and forgiveness,

fellowship and community, have been used for the healing task of the Christian minister. I like to use the word hospitality, not only because it has such deep roots in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, but also, and primarily, because it gives us more insight into the nature of response to the human condition of loneliness. Hospitality is the virtue which allows us to break through the narrowness of our own fears and to open our houses to the stranger, with the intuition that salvation comes to us in the form of a tired traveler. Hospitality makes anxious disciples into powerful witnesses, makes suspicious owners into generous givers, and makes closed-minded sectarians into interested recipients of new ideas and insights.

But it has become very difficult for us today to fully understand the implications of hospitality. Like the Semitic nomads, we live in a desert with many lonely travelers who are looking for a moment of peace, for a fresh drink and for a sign of encouragement so that they can continue their mysterious search for freedom.

What does hospitality as a healing power require? It requires first of all that the host feel at home in his own house, and secondly that he create a free and fearless place for the unexpected visitor. Therefore, hospitality embraces two concepts: concentration and community.

1. Hospitality and concentration

Hospitality is the ability to pay attention to the guest. This is very difficult, since we are preoccupied with our own needs, worries and tensions, which prevent us from taking distance from ourselves in order to pay attention to others.

Not long ago I met a parish priest. After describing his hectic daily schedule—religious services, classroom

teaching, luncheon and dinner engagements, and organizational meetings—he said apologetically: “Yes . . . but there are so many problems. . . .” When I asked, “Whose problems?” he was silent for a few minutes, and then more or less reluctantly said, “I guess—my own.” Indeed, his incredible activities seemed in large part motivated by fear of what he would discover when he came to a standstill. He actually said: “I guess I am busy in order to avoid a painful self-concentration.”

So we find it extremely hard to pay attention because of our intentions. As soon as our intentions take over, the question no longer is, “Who is he?” but, “What can I get from him?”—and then we no longer listen to what he is saying but to what we can do with what he is saying. Then the fulfillment of our unrecognized need for sympathy, friendship, popularity, success, understanding, money or a career becomes our concern, and instead of paying attention to the other person we impose ourselves upon him with intrusive curiosity. (See James Hillman: *Insearch*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1967, p. 18.)

Anyone who wants to pay attention without intention has to be at home in his own house—that is, he has to discover the center of his life in his own heart. Concentration, which leads to meditation and contemplation, is therefore the necessary precondition for true hospitality. When our souls are restless, when we are driven by thousands of different and often conflicting stimuli, when we are always “over there” between people, ideas and the worries of this world, how can we possibly create the room and space where someone else can enter freely without feeling himself an unlawful intruder?

Paradoxically, by withdrawing into ourselves, not out of self-pity but out of humility, we create the space for another to be himself and to come to us on his own terms. James Hillman, director of studies at the C. G. Jung Institute in Zurich, speaking about counseling, writes:

For the other person to open and talk requires a withdrawal of the counselor. I must withdraw to make room for the other . . . This withdrawal, rather than going-out-to-meet the other, is an intense act of concentration, a model for which can be found in the Jewish mystical doctrine of Tsimtsum. God as omnipresent and omnipotent was everywhere. He filled the universe with his Being. How then could the creation come about? . . . God had to create by withdrawal; He created the not-Him, the other, by self-concentration . . . On the human level, withdrawal of myself aids the other to come into being. (*Insearch*, p. 31)

But human withdrawal is a very painful and lonely process, because it forces us to face directly our own condition in all its beauty as well as misery. When we are not afraid to enter into our own center and to concentrate on the stirrings of our own soul, we come to know that being alive means being loved. This experience tells us that we can only love because we are born out of love, that we can only give because our life is a gift, and that we can only make others free because we are set free by Him whose heart is greater than ours. When we have found the anchor places for our lives in our own center, we can be free to let others enter into the space created for them and allow them to dance their own dance, sing their own song and speak their

own language without fear. Then our presence is no longer threatening and demanding but inviting and liberating.

2. Hospitality and community

The minister who has come to terms with his own loneliness and is at home in his own house is a host who offers hospitality to his guests. He gives them a friendly space, where they may feel free to come and go, to be close and distant, to rest and to play, to talk and to be silent, to eat and to fast. The paradox indeed is that hospitality asks for the creation of an empty space where the guest can find his own soul.

Why is this a healing ministry? It is healing because it takes away the false illusion that wholeness can be given by one to another. It is healing because it does not take away the loneliness and the pain of another, but invites him to recognize his loneliness on a level where it can be shared. Many people in this life suffer because they are anxiously searching for the man or woman, the event or encounter, which will take their loneliness away. But when they enter a house with real hospitality they soon see that their own wounds must be understood not as sources of despair and bitterness, but as signs that they have to travel on in obedience to the calling sounds of their own wounds.

From this we get an idea of the kind of help a minister may offer. A minister is not a doctor whose primary task is to take away pain. Rather, he deepens the pain to a level where it can be shared. When someone comes with his loneliness to the minister, he can only expect that his loneliness will be understood and felt, so that he no longer has to run away from it but can accept it as an expression of his basic human con-

dition. When a woman suffers the loss of her child, the minister is not called upon to comfort her by telling her that she still has two beautiful healthy children at home; he is challenged to help her realize that the death of her child reveals her own mortal condition, the same human condition which he and others share with her.

Perhaps the main task of the minister is to prevent people from suffering for the wrong reasons. Many people suffer because of the false supposition on which they have based their lives. That supposition is that there should be no fear or loneliness, no confusion or doubt. But these sufferings can only be dealt with creatively when they are understood as wounds integral to our human condition. Therefore ministry is a very confronting service. It does not allow people to live with illusions of immortality and wholeness. It keeps reminding others that they are mortal and broken, but also that with the recognition of this condition, liberation starts.

No minister can save anyone. He can only offer himself as a guide to fearful people. Yet, paradoxically, it is precisely in this guidance that the first signs of hope become visible. This is so because a shared pain is no longer paralyzing but mobilizing, when understood as a way to liberation. When we become aware that we do not have to escape our pains, but that we can mobilize them into a common search for life, those very pains are transformed from expressions of despair into signs of hope.

Through this common search, hospitality becomes community. Hospitality becomes community as it creates a unity based on the shared confession of our basic brokenness and on a shared hope. This hope in turn leads us far beyond the boundaries of human

togetherness to Him who calls His people away from the land of slavery to the land of freedom. It belongs to the central insight of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, that it is the call of God which forms the people of God.

A Christian community is therefore a healing community not because wounds are cured and pains are alleviated, but because wounds and pains become openings or occasions for a new vision. Mutual confession then becomes a mutual deepening of hope, and sharing weakness becomes a reminder to one and all of the coming strength.

When loneliness is among the chief wounds of the minister, hospitality can convert that wound into a source of healing. Concentration prevents the minister from burdening others with his pain and allows him to accept his wounds as helpful teachers of his own and his neighbor's condition. Community arises where the sharing of pain takes place, not as a stifling form of self-complaint, but as a recognition of God's saving promises.

CONCLUSION

I started this chapter with the story of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, who asked Elijah, "When will the Messiah come?" There is an important conclusion to this story. When Elijah had explained to him how he could find the Messiah sitting among the poor at the gates of the city, Rabbi Joshua ben Levi went to the Messiah and said to him:

"Peace unto you, my master and teacher."

The Messiah answered, "Peace unto you, son of Levi."

He asked, "When is the master coming?"

"Today," he answered.

Rabbi Yoshua returned to Elijah, who asked, "What did he tell you?"

"He indeed has deceived me, for he said 'Today I am coming' and he has not come."

Elijah said, "This is what he told you: 'Today if you would listen to His voice.'" (Psalm 95.7)

Even when we know that we are called to be wounded healers, it is still very difficult to acknowledge that healing has to take place today. Because we are living in days when our wounds have become all too visible. Our loneliness and isolation has become so much a part of our daily experience, that we cry out for a Liberator who will take us away from our misery and bring us justice and peace.

To announce, however, that the Liberator is sitting among the poor and that the wounds are signs of hope and that today is the day of liberation, is a step very few can take. But this is exactly the announcement of the wounded healer: "The master is coming—not tomorrow, but today, not next year, but this year, not after all our misery is passed, but in the middle of it, not in another place but right here where we are standing."

And with a challenging confrontation he says:

O that today you would listen to his voice!
Harden not your heart as at Meribah,
as on that day at Massah in the desert
when they tried me, though they saw
my work. (Psalm 95.7-9)

If indeed we listen to the voice and believe that ministry is a sign of hope, because it makes visible the first

rays of light of the coming Messiah, we can make ourselves and others understand that we already carry in us the source of our own search. Thus ministry can indeed be a witness to the living truth that the wound, which causes us to suffer now, will be revealed to us later as the place where God intimated his new creation.

CONCLUSION

:8 Grieving Gay

We've looked at the journey. We've looked at the myth. We've looked at grieving. We've come to see that grieving is a useful metaphor for both psychotherapy and spiritual formation, but that there is a difference. Traditional psychotherapy aspires to give everything over to the ego. Spiritual formation aspires to give the ego up, too. Now we must look at how all of this relates to the gay predicament.

In the course of a lifetime, some people have to grieve more than others. There's no reason for it. It isn't necessarily fair. "Man asks, 'why me?' God answers, 'Why not' " There is little use in calling it cruel and inhuman. It is just how it is.

There is a danger in even *saying* "Some people have to grieve more than others." It can trigger obnoxious outpourings of indulgent self-pity. After all, what do you get from knowing that you have a harder row to hoe than the next guy? When all's said and done, your row is your row.

But in order to understand why gay patients need more spiritual nourishment than most other people, it is important to know what makes their situation different. We saw earlier that gays are excluded from the myth, from the structures and systems that most people use to gain a sense (albeit false) of security and well-being. We took a look at what this means already. We saw a few examples of how it works. It is time to look it square in the eye. What is the experience of grieving gay?

People tend to underestimate the plight of gay people. Gays soft sell their lot mostly because they've gotten used to it; it feels "normal." Bleeding-heart heterosexuals understate gay oppression mostly to assuage their consciences. "Oh, it's not really so much worse for gays. Things are tough all around." And, of course, conservative reactionaries (Moral Majority types) think that anything short of burning at the stake is too lenient.

As a way to avoid such minimizing, let's take some time to peruse a sampler of the things most gay people have to give up. I don't intend this survey to be a manifesto, a declaration of grievances, or a prelude to "poor us." It is here for one purpose only: to make clear how it is.

Let's start with relationships. How about families? I haven't known too many openly gay people whose families welcomed them with open arms. Partial or utter rejection are more common reactions.

Since a friend of mine came out to his mother, he hasn't heard from her. It's been three years. He is the oldest of three children; she now talks about her two kids.

More common is partial rejection. "O.K. Now we know," parents of another friend of mine said to him when he told them he was gay. "But don't *ever* mention it to us again!" He still goes home for visits, but there's that awful hole there, that huge part of his being that he's not allowed to share with them: his lover, their life together—its pains, its joys.

Badgering and ridicule from those nearest and dearest are also common fare for gay people. The story of Tim from Norman Brown's book is a breath-taking example of that. But it's a fairly ordinary story. Like a patient whose alcoholic mother calls him twice a week and begins each conversation with lines like, "Well, who's my queer son screwing around with *this* week?"

Gay people who were heterosexually married and have children often face a very painful kind of grieving having to do with child custody and visitation rights. Recently in Virginia, a lesbian mother legally lost all right of contact with her son.

After divorcing her husband, she was given custody of the

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child. She began living with a lesbian lover; her ex-husband remarried. One evening, he arranged to pick up their son purportedly to go to a dinner party. They never returned.

He took the child out of state, called his ex-wife, and told her he was keeping the boy. She was upset but they agreed she could visit.

Some months later, the man's new wife sued to adopt the child, basing her argument on the mother's unfitness because of her sexual preference. She won. The boy's mother is now forbidden to have any contact with her son at all.

Granted, this is a dramatic example. But most gay male and lesbian parents face tremendous grief and pain around the issues of child custody and visitation rights.

So much for families. Then there are relationships with friends. Gay people who come out after having lived secretly for a number of years usually hope to keep their straight friends. Sometimes they do. Most often, they don't. Sometimes they are just out and out cut off. "You're *what*?" If not cut off, they are seen as an embarrassment to socialize with or invite over. "I'd love to have you two over for my birthday party," a woman told a lesbian couple I know, "but it would freak my mother out. Maybe just the three of us could get together sometime." They never did.

Having a gay friend often touches a raw nerve in straight people. So many Americans have unresolved sexual conflicts that a gay person evokes in them a shadow side of themselves that they find terrifying. It's nothing personal, of course, but it makes them drift off anyway.

The fact is that when gay people come out, they usually end up in a ghetto.

What happens with co-workers is about the same story as what happens with friends, but it's more frightening. After all, unless you quit, you are "stuck" with your workmates. If an openly gay person encounters a homophobic co-worker or boss—even if they can't be fired—life at work turns into a perpetual hassle.

Being gay means giving up many personal relationships. But there's lots more to let go of. Take, for example, security.

First, there is job security. In most places in the United States, employers with impunity can fire gay employees "just because." It often happens. Take, for instance, my boss at the software firm. The company was located in Maryland where there are no protective laws for gay people. He *legally* could have fired me on the spot. (The only reason he didn't, by the way, was because he was afraid of publicity.)

In the few places where homosexuals *are* protected by law from discrimination in employment, there are still tried and true techniques for getting rid of gay employees. (They were perfected on blacks and women.) You either don't promote them, or harass them, or disenfranchise them. They eventually leave. Like my friend Judith.

Judith was assistant director of a college library in Washington, which *has* protective laws. A new male director was hired and soon discovered that Judith was lesbian. He found out by pestering her for a date until she finally told him she was homosexual and had a lover. Over the course of the next three months, he divested her of her entire job, giving pieces of it—a little here and a little there—to other employees. He even stopped inviting her (the assistant director, you'll remember) to staff meetings. Her days consisted of sitting at her desk reading library journals.

When salary increase time came around, unlike her one-time subordinates who got seven percent raises or more, Judith got nothing.

She stuck it out for nine months, hoping it would blow over. It didn't. And mind you, all the while, as he slowly "stuck it to her," the director was *most* cordial.

After nine months, Judith started looking for another job. She eventually found one. But the director still managed to get in a parting shot. He refused to give her a recommendation. In his words, "I just haven't been able to get a feel for what you can do."

Although I know of no studies that substantiate this, I suspect that the majority of openly gay people fall into the lowest national income categories.

But there are other things to be secured besides jobs. Like

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your rights and your health and maybe even your life. Gay people who need legal or police protection generally don't get it. Refusal of a lease on an apartment because the resident manager "can't stand fags," dismissal from a job, or denial of credit are usually lost causes for gay people in terms of recourse.

Homosexuals who get beaten up by "queer-baiters" or "rolled" have learned not to bother dialing 911. Police attitudes in many places (especially rural ones) are commonly, "They got what they deserved." Worse, in a lot of cases, gay victims don't report such incidents because they're afraid of "blowing their cover."

A friend of mine, Ken, visited a man in Chicago last Christmas. Saturday night, they were walking through the city (just walking, mind you—not holding hands, embracing, or otherwise "flaunting" their gayness). A carload of young thugs pulled up, assumed that the two were gay, dragged Ken off to a van, beat him unconscious, and dumped him in a gutter thinking he was dead. Actually he only had a severe concussion, two black eyes, loose teeth, and bruises from one end of his body to the other.

Anyway, Ken went to the police. They sized him up, figured he was "one of them," took the report *pro forma*, and, as he left the station, told him amusedly that he shouldn't expect to hear from them.

Aside from giving up protection, there is living with outright legal persecution. In most states, homosexual acts are considered felonies. For example, were I and a lover to move to Virginia, we could successfully be prosecuted and imprisoned for making love. (Incidentally, in Virginia, we could also be refused driver's permits and drinks in a bar.)

An attempt by a gay person to make social contact with someone on a sidewalk can be dangerous. A gay man I knew walked up to a man he found attractive (in an area where gay people hang out) and, thinking he was gay, gave him "the eye" and pulled out a terribly tired old line, "Got a light?" What he got was arrested by a plainclothesman for "solicit-

ing." (Could you imagine a straight man being arrested for "putting the make on" a woman in the same context?)

Being in a gay bar (unfortunately the only social outlet for many gay people) can reap harassment or arrest outside for "loitering" or "jaywalking" or arrest inside on equally trumped-up charges if the bar is raided. If gay people get jailed on manufactured charges like these, they can expect degrading treatment, not to mention being prime targets of sexual assault.

What about security in religious institutions? Surely, the bosom of Holy Mother Church. Well actually, more often than not, churches foment homophobia. Gays can expect to be excommunicated or excoriated by fundamentalists, evangelicals, Roman Catholics, Mormons, Baptists, and most Lutheran or Methodist congregations. Presbyterians, Episcopalians, the United Church of Christ, Unitarians, and Quakers (especially the last three) are more accepting of gays, but even there, acceptance means tolerance.

Ordination is denied gay people in all denominations except the United Church of Christ and the Unitarian Church. Marriage for gays is forbidden by all denominations, which at the same time condemn homosexuals for engaging in "promiscuous sex," i.e., sex outside of marriage.

Another whole set of exclusions from the myth are applied specifically against gay couples. Since gay marriages are denied legal recognition in every state of the union, the legal and financial benefits that accrue to straight married people are legally denied gay people. Take Penny.

Penny is an older woman, who lived with her lover Melissa for seventeen years. They owned a home together, all of its furnishings, a summer cottage, and a boat.

Melissa died last year. In her will, she specifically left everything to Penny. Melissa's family, who had had nothing to do with her for years, became greedy after she died. They contested the will on the grounds that Penny and Melissa were "unrelated" and that Melissa, by virtue of being homosexual, was "mentally unsound." In the rural county where the case

was tried, the family won. Penny, at fifty-eight, lost everything: the house, the cottage, the boat—even the bed she and Melissa had slept in for seventeen years. Such wills are routinely broken, and many a gay spouse or lover has been left broken and penniless.

Equally oppressive is that, just as gay people can't legally marry, so they can't legally divorce. Since gay people who separate can be just as vicious as straight people in the same predicament, things can get pretty ugly. But all of the protections that civil law provides for separating straight couples are missing in the case of gay couples.

Then there is a potpourri of subtle ways in which gay couples get passed over by the myth. Listing a gay spouse or lover as beneficiary on a life insurance policy is usually impossible; joint applications for auto insurance (even on a jointly owned car) are denied; health insurance inclusion for a gay spouse is disallowed; and filing joint income tax returns is prohibited. Public displays of affection—a kiss goodbye to a lover on a street corner, an arm-in-arm stroll, a spontaneous hug, dancing—can in most places reap a gay couple anything from arrest for “lewd and lascivious conduct” to sniggers and giggles to being beaten to a pulp.

Next are the double-binding, no-win imponderable social situations. What do you do when invited to a party that you know is going to be suburban straight and the host says, “Bring a friend”? If you leave your lover home, you both feel awful; if you go together, you both feel awful uncomfortable.

And what do gay couples do about visiting relatives, especially around holidays? Let's say the couple isn't out. With their families expecting them each home, either they go to their respective homesteads (and miss the most important days of the year together) or they spend the holidays together (and deal with confusion and fury on the home front). If the couple is out, the situation is usually no better. Families who may tolerate having a gay son or lesbian daughter home for Christmas most often forbid them to bring along a lover or spouse. The same double-bind obtains.

Notice that the list so far is skewed toward adult gay people

who are to some degree open about their sexuality. But what about homosexuals who are too afraid to come out?

We who live in cities often err by generalizing from our own urban experience where gays have more freedom and protection. But most people don't live in cities. Many live in rural areas where being openly gay is a terrifying prospect.

For three years, I lived with a lover in a rural county of Maryland. We spent a good deal of time locked in a very claustrophobic closet. There were both shades and drapes at all of our apartment windows and we made a furtive ritual of closing them whenever we came home.

I held a prominent position in the county government, and he taught in a parochial school. The schizophrenia of our lives was almost unbearable. I weighed fifty pounds more than I do now, developed alarmingly high blood pressure, underwent two G.I. series in a year to try to detect a suspected ulcer, carried medication around to treat regularly recurring stomach cramps, and suffered from insomnia and severe headaches. And I was only twenty-six!

It was “red-neck” country. Besides tobacco farming and shellfish harvesting, the major county occupation was drinking. It wasn't a crazy paranoid fantasy at all to imagine a bunch of the boys, drunk at the local bar, getting bored and deciding to go “mess up the two ‘queers’ who lived down the road.” In the three years I was there, I heard “fag” jokes almost daily as well as many a relished tale about how so-and-so and so-and-so had beat the shit out of the fairy who worked at . . .

The homophobia that gets controlled into benevolent discomfort for bleeding-heart liberal heterosexuals in cities and suburbs is raw and unmitigated in rural areas. As with blacks not so long ago, gays aren't seen quite as people. Killing a “queer” is about equivalent to shooting a rabbit. But there's more to it than that; there's more hate in it.

At any rate, being dumb but not stupid, I decided early on that my survival in rural Maryland depended on my closet. But at what price?

It would be comforting to think that the rural mindset about

gays is changing. But fundamentalist preachers in rural towns still call for homosexuals—abominations of God—to be locked up, burned at the stake, or mutilated. Their congregations take them seriously.

Another whole class of people not yet mentioned who have grieving to do are emerging gay teenagers. I have told several stories so far about gay men who were tormented through their school years for being “sissies.” There are similar stories for girls who get labeled “dykes.” Almost without exception, patients that I see recount such tales. It would be nice to think things are changing, but in fact, the torment continues.

About two years ago, I facilitated a workshop for teachers in the District of Columbia public school system to help them better understand and deal with gay students and their homophobic classmates. The horror stories they told were incredible.

Like the sixteen-year-old boy (slightly on the “effeminate” side) who was being chased around the locker room by a group of his peers who were trying to pin him face down and shove an umbrella into his rectum. They had just about succeeded when a coach just happened to walk through and intervened.

What made such stories worse was how matter-of-factly the teachers told them; they appeared to be common occurrences.

When you put all of the particulars together, the gestalt is oppression. The experience is not of moving from one particular to another; it is a constant, chronic feeling of not belonging, of being threatened and rejected.

The point is that we are not looking at some negative philosophical hypothesis on society's part that a gay person may simply disagree with and choose to ignore. We are looking at a monolithic system bent on making life for gay people as miserable as possible. It confronts the gay person at every turn. In the words of a close friend, “You live with it every minute of your life.”

The whole structure of means for achieving comfort and security that is taken for granted by straight people is denied gay people. Most things that *everybody* wants in order to feel “safe and sound” are simply not attainable by homosexuals. Living without them causes tremendous anxiety. Giving that

security up is exceedingly difficult. And yet this is precisely what most gay people are forced to do.

Helping gay people grieve at this level is very difficult. Giving up parental support—perhaps never being able to see parents or siblings again—is an excruciating letting go. It's like having your whole family die at once. Knowing that, almost overnight, you might lose your job if your supervisors changed or “found out” makes dreaming or planning for the future very precarious. Realizing that you could walk down a street in most cities, be identified as gay, and be beaten up or worse can make death a not-too-subliminal, ever-present companion. Hearing people hurl insults at you from passing cars, or preachers denouncing homosexuals from pulpits, the radio, or TV, or reading about the latest anathema from Rome and not being immobilized by rage or self-hate is no easy maneuver. Reading in *Newsweek* about the latest poll confirming that most of the people in the country consider you sick or immoral or despicable is not an easy burden to lift off your shoulders.

What may be hardest about helping gay people give up all of this stuff is their lack of choice about their plight. The giving-up gay people have to do doesn't begin voluntarily; most would just as soon buy into the myth and live as happily ever after as they *think* their straight counterparts are living.

In contrast, some people *choose* to buy out of the myth. People who join ashrams, for instance, know life will be hell sometimes. They know what gurus are like. They know they will have to give up most of what gave them comfort and security. But the point is nobody forced them to do it. They chose their lot.

The bottom line, of course, is that gay people just don't have a choice. Oppression is simply what gay people face when they are authentic.

Well, what do gay people do when faced with oppression? There are three common strategies: avoid it, fight it, or suffer through it. Let's look at those three options.

Avoiding the oppression usually means pretending you're not oppressed. It amounts to being stuck at the denial or bargaining stage of grieving. For gay people, it often takes the

form of a closet. Unlike the two other predominant minorities discriminated against in our society—blacks and women—being gay doesn't necessarily *show*. Under a cloak of secrecy, many gay people hide and manage to build very tall houses of cards; they move into very well-appointed closets. They often come into therapy troubled by very severe neurotic behavior (e.g., depression, paranoia, phobias, alcoholism) but are indignantly affronted if you suggest that there is a link between such behavior and being in a closet. We'll see some of this in Joe's story, later on.

Another type of avoidance usually happens in the course of therapy. In the process of grieving old chains that bound, gay patients sometimes go through a period of feeling their negative self-image turn positive. It feels like the whole world is opening up. This has some dangers, as a patient named Ed discovered.

Ed had been working very hard in therapy. In the course of a year, he had grieved a lot. Together we had taken the painful trip back through an appalling childhood and adolescence. He reclaimed and wept for eighteen years of mistreatment at the hands of two very sadistic parents who catapulted him into adulthood with almost no sense of worth.

Ed looked, and cried, and went through a period of murderous rage at two people who had hurt him so deeply, who tortured him so resolutely, especially around his identity as an emerging gay person. Public humiliations, constant harassment about his homosexuality, forced trips to unenlightened psychiatrists, and hospitalizations that included electroshock aversion "therapy," all were part of the horror story he unfolded.

Slowly (like Rachel) he cried himself dry and screamed himself hoarse over most of the horror and fear he had carried with him into adulthood. And bit by bit, he came to know his own goodness and worth as he liberated himself from all of the messages he had been shackled with that were intended to destroy him (and almost did). He began to like himself, to feel powerful. For a while he was intoxicated with his sense of well-being and freedom.

I recall one session in this ebullient period in particular. Ed came in more exuberant than I'd ever seen him. He told me how good he felt. How wonderful it was to no longer feel like dirt, or a freak, or a derelict, or a sinner. The hour ended with Ed on cloud nine. He had finally freed himself from the chains of his past. The world was his.

He emerged onto the street (he told me in the next hour) and was almost immediately accosted by a group of five inner-city toughs who had pegged him as homosexual. They collared him, called him a "fag," a "fairy," a "queer," a "punk," roughed him up, took his wallet, and ran off laughing.

The next hour was a heavy one. Ed had learned in a cruel way the limits of his freedom. He came to know that he had another whole level of grieving to do. The past he had pretty well dealt with. But the present had, until then, eluded him. And he hadn't even considered the future.

It is not enough, in therapy, to help gay people transform a negative self-image into a positive one because the world into which they emerge is, quite literally, "out to get them." It's no paranoid projection; it's for real. Not only must gay people give up attachment to what might have been but wasn't, they must also let go of what might be now and isn't and what the future might have held but won't.

It is important to keep this in mind when working with gay people. It is worse than useless to harbor the illusion, let alone communicate it to the patient, that having completed therapy, the gay patient will find a way to live "happily ever after." That is foolish even if you are working with straight patients. It is frankly cruel to offer that kind of hope to a gay patient. Gay patients will ask for it. They will want to believe that if they just work hard in therapy, make the right changes in their lives, that the burden of oppression meted out to them as gay people will be lifted off their shoulders. That kind of hope you cannot offer. Your silence in the face of such verbalized hopes, painful though it may be, will, however, help the patient deeper into the abyss—which is all they will be able to see at first—but also into the bosom of God.

Another ingrained way to deal with oppression is to fight

it. But railing against the oppressor doesn't work very well either. It's being stuck at the anger state of grieving.

When I make statements like that, I usually drive gay activists up a wall. "What are you advocating?" they retort. "Should we just lay down and take it?" And, of course, being something of an activist myself, I don't mean that at all.

I'm not suggesting that gay people shouldn't protest or march or write letters or circulate petitions. The oppressed have got to speak the pain of their exile if they're going to be authentic. "To be silent when they should protest makes cowards of men."²

But what do you do with your anger if you lose? If you're attached to winning as opposed to genuinely speaking your pain, and you're fighting a losing battle, you may spend the rest of your days enraged. Many gay militants do.

Then there's suffering through, a very common way gay people respond to their oppression. Suffering through is being stuck at the depression stage of grieving. Another word for it is despair.

My stereotype of a gay person in this situation is the fifty-year-old male government worker who puts in his eight hours a day, lives alone in an efficiency apartment, has no gay friends, is out to no one, and whose only social or sexual outlet is having clandestine, anonymous sex in public restrooms or parks or pornographic movie houses. He has given up, all right, but it is not a giving-up that frees. It's more like a caving-in. The oppression isn't just accepted; it's totally ingested.

Avoiding it, fighting it, or suffering through it don't appear to be very helpful ways to deal with oppression. There seems to be only one way out. Deeper.

I'm suggesting that since being in exile isn't negotiable, it might as well be embraced. And since it demands such drastic givings-up, it might as well be used as an opportunity for spiritual growth. Giving-up, after all, is manna for the spiritual journey.

Crazy as that may sound, it comes down to this. If you don't have any choice about being in exile, then why not *really* be

in exile? Why not affirm it with your whole heart and soul? It may not make sense. ("Why me? Lord, why me?") It may not seem fair or just. ("I didn't ask for this!") But it might just be a God-given invitation to spiritual deepening. It just might be a blessing in disguise. It just might be an opportunity.

What gay people ultimately have to give up is attachment to rejection and the need for people to affirm their wholeness and loveableness. It works like this.

If you can't get confirmation of your wholeness and your rightful place in the universe from *people* and the myth, you just have to look beyond them. You have no choice but to get it from someplace else, someplace deeper, someplace more cosmic.

If you give up denying, fighting, or wallowing in the oppression, you stop being stuck in the mud. Off you go down the road.

You begin to see that freedom and a sense of belonging aren't to be found in the myth at all. They never were. You begin to understand what Jesus meant when he said, "My kingdom is not of this world."³

As you begin to experience your belongingness on a cosmic level, everything seems to lighten up. It doesn't all feel so heavy. It just is. Then what people think of you or try to do to you doesn't matter so much. What matters is that you love and are loved by love. And nobody can take it away from you. Nobody. That's solid. That's real.

You begin to realize that you've got ahold of something very special. It's really what you were looking for all along. Then it dawns on you that the exile was a gift.

I'd like to tell you a story of a fellow who took that journey. He made it.

"I'm not oppressed," shouted a patient named Joe in response to my suggesting that he just might be. "I have a responsible job; I make \$25,000 a year; I own a condo in Alexandria; I drive a Pontiac Bonneville; I wear designer clothes; I go to Europe every other year; and no one has ever yelled anything derogatory at me out of a car window."

When I probed to find out how open he was about his sex-

uality, he became extremely defensive and summarily dismissed the whole matter with, "That's my personal life; it's nobody's business."

That would all track very well except for the fact that Joe harbored tremendous fears (uncovered much later) that he would be "found out." His parents were getting curious about his "roommate" of five years, and his employers had given up suggesting he bring "a friend" to business dinners. He suspected they "knew." Then there was the fact that Joe did all of his socializing in bars in Baltimore so that there would be no chance of his being spotted in Washington, and his equally denied worry that he might be drinking "a bit too heavily." Finally, there were the hypertension and rashes, and the upper G.I. series that had not yet detected an ulcer. But Joe was resolutely *not* oppressed.

For Joe, getting past denial took a long time. Again and again, I held a mirror up for him to see different aspects of his life. Again and again, he refused to look. Too painful. Too much to give up. His physical symptoms increased. The ulcer was finally diagnosed. The house of cards began to crumble.

Bargaining came next. Yes, he was oppressed. But if he could just come out to a few close straight friends, that would be enough. Just realizing the oppression made it, he thought, unnecessary to actually confront the situations that were hemming him in.

Ironically (the Lord provides), at about this time, a whisper campaign about him began at his office. A secretary had noticed that his "roommate" seemed to call him every day. Good material for a scandal. He was called in by his supervisor eventually, who told him about this "malicious rumor" and assured Joe that he would pay it no heed.

Joe began frantically looking for another job—another closet to crawl into. Next time he would be more careful: no calls from his lover, enough fake dates with women to ensure his cover, a "fag" joke here and there to leave no doubt in anyone's mind. His ulcer worsened. He was hospitalized for two weeks. A showdown lurked on the horizon.

Joe passed through anger and depression fairly quickly. Perhaps it was because he had been in therapy for a year and

knew what the process of grieving was about already. But it was probably more a function of being brought face to face with the choice of either giving up or dying. The house of cards had toppled and he knew it. At any rate, our next session after his return from the hospital was a landmark one. He cursed heaven and the injustice of the world. He swore revenge. And he cried.

Things changed a lot after that. Joe eventually came out at work. He wasn't fired, but he was given clear signals that he had seen his last promotion. Some co-workers shied away from him, but some were very supportive. Nobody treated him badly. His supervisor's communications became peremptory for a while and then softened some, but they've never really been the same. He still works at the same firm; it was the best option. It's a good job with good benefits. He likes the work. But it's a bittersweet situation. He must daily experience the subtle and not-so-subtle forms of oppression meted out to gay people. But it isn't intolerable.

Joe also came out to his parents and sister. It's been six months and his parents still won't speak to him. That hurts. But his sister "was cool," in his words, and had both him *and* his lover to her house for Christmas dinner (much to their parents' horror). Who knows where that all will go?

Joe now socializes in Washington. Why not? Everyone whom he feared would find out already knows. He has also become active in the local chapter of his religious denomination's gay caucus.

Is Joe happier? Hard to say. He experiences on a daily basis more of the pain of his oppression than he did before. But he also experiences more joy. Perhaps the point is that he simply experiences *more*. Now. In the present. In the world *as it is*. Many fewer games. Much less effort. Much more reality. Does that make him happier? Maybe it would be better just to say that he's glad he did it.

Joe's life as a homosexual will contain more pain than most. He will be subject to the entire spectrum of oppression sketched out in the sampler presented above. He will be "kept down" on the corporate ladder, probably tolerated at best by his parents, forced at least partially into a gay ghetto, denied

legal protections, and consigned to lower salaries than his ample talents and efforts would normally command. In short, he will be forced to dwell on the outskirts of society, in that no man's land between the fertile land and the desert. Joe's therapy, then, was a journey into exile—an exile he came to embrace.

In the past month, Joe has talked a lot about not needing society's approval any more to know that God loves him as a gay person. He talks about how church and society are wrong and that, if they only stepped back and looked at what they were doing, they would see how myopic they are being. He acknowledges with a bit of sadness that he will probably never know "total freedom" as a gay person, but that living "out" and trying to help educate the church "feels good because every little bit helps."

Joe, in my estimation, has broken through to a new level of awareness. He speaks now from a spiritual plane distinctly different from his previous one. The context in which he sees his life is inestimably broader. He had acquired some measure of cosmic perspective. He has given up to life in exile, not passively, but in a way that allows him to participate much more fully in his life as it unfolds, joy and sorrow, the whole mixed bag.

The clearest indication to me of Joe's new spiritual depth is his new-found ability to love, his openness. He's a totally different person to be with now.

The first time I saw him he was rigid, defensive, and closed. His brow was perpetually furrowed; his mouth set. He felt miles away, courteous but icy cold. Now his posture is relaxed. His face is remarkably different: unselfconscious, yielding, and soft. Now he's with me when we're together—intimately with me. He's a joy to spend an hour with. Sadly for me, there probably won't be many more of them.

My work with Joe is similar in many respects to my work with most gay Christians. The ground rules are simple enough. Keeping them is frequently difficult.

The job of anyone who sets out to be a guide for those on the journey is to help patients grasp reality as deeply and broadly as they are ready to handle. It means, as I have said

earlier, that the therapist must repeatedly hold a mirror up for patients to see who they really are. This is done in bits and pieces over a long period of time.

At first all patients can see is what they have established for themselves as a self-image. You invite them to look closer. They see more of themselves, some of which they like, some of which they despise and try to reject. You hold the mirror firmly. They look again and again and again. Perhaps they come to accept more, even the warts. For gay people, it includes their coming to accept and to be able to behold their sexuality.

You ask them to look again. Deeper. They notice an aura. This may be an aspect of themselves they hadn't noticed. They begin to grasp the holy, their spirits. You shift and begin using larger and larger mirrors. They begin to notice the context in which they live and have their being. Again, at first, all they will notice is the universe they have imagined. Then the aspects they hadn't noticed, both the beautiful and the ugly. For gay people, this will require looking squarely into a social milieu that oppresses them. The anguish of that must be drunk to the dregs.

Yet a larger mirror. And a larger. Until the context is infinity, eternity, the All, God. And then they perhaps just glimpse—for who can truly *grasp* the All—that they are there, minuscule perhaps, but integral parts of the cosmic puzzle, necessary parts for the puzzle to be whole, and that the All, in all of its contortions, is strangely beautiful.

Joe came to know his own goodness by looking beyond himself and society to the cosmic goodness of all that is. He learned to love by coming to accept God's universe in its totality—with all of its beauties, contortions, and contradictions. His new-found compassion and concern for church and society and his commitment to help them grow—in spite of how resolutely they will try to undo his efforts and oppress him—reflects his having struck a spiritual stratum far beneath many of his fellow human beings. As he sent his spiritual roots deeper, he tapped the fertile soil of unfathomable love. And now he is free, free to love . . . anyway, give . . . anyway.



The birds and beasts witness the story of Creation in a richly detailed 17th-century Dutch painting. At

right, God creates Adam, next (left) fashions Eve from his rib, then (center left) presents her to her mate.

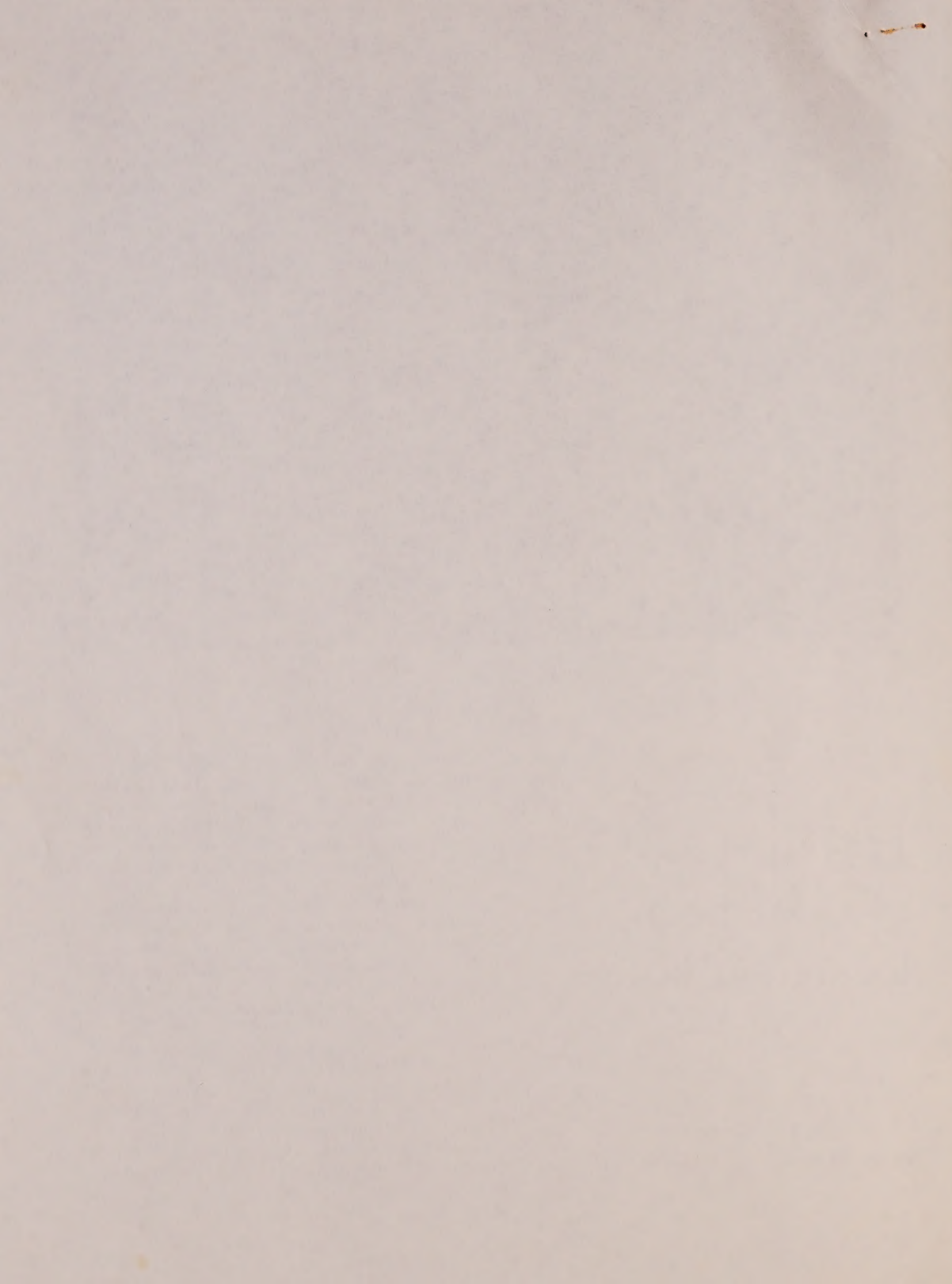
By Dora Jane Hamblin

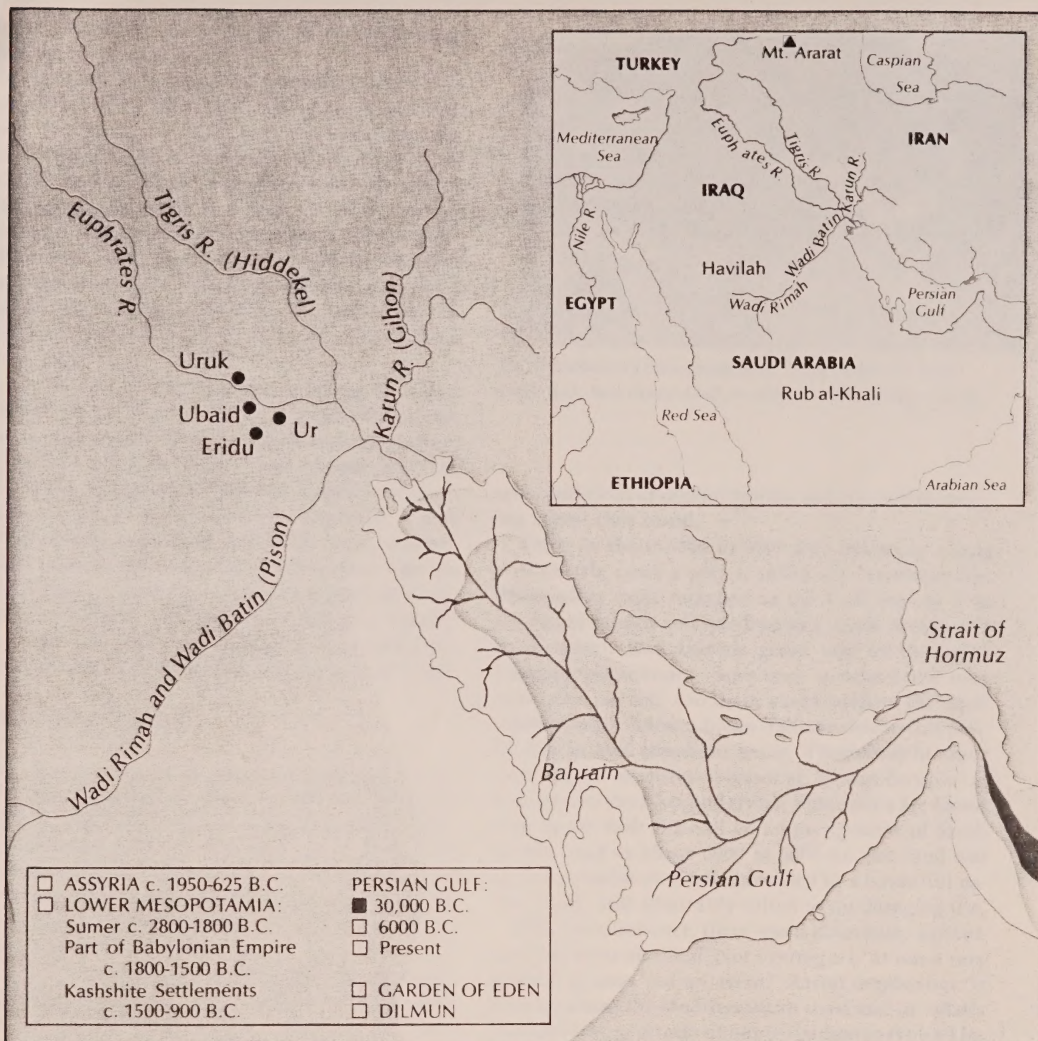
Has the Garden of Eden been located at last?

By using an interdisciplinary approach, archaeologist Juris Zarins believes he's found it—and can pinpoint it for us

"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed" (*Genesis 2:8*). Then the majestic words become quite specific: "And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel [Tigris]: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates" (*Genesis 2:10-14*).

But where now are the Pison and the Gihon? And where, if indeed it existed as a geographically specific place, was the Garden of Eden? Theologians, historians, ordinary inquisitive people and men of science have tried for centuries to figure it out. Eden has been "located" in as many diverse areas as has lost Atlantis. Some early Christian fathers and late classical authors





The area thought to be the Garden of Eden, which was flooded when Gulf waters rose, is shown in green.

Yellow areas of Bahrain and Arabian coast represent Dilmun, paradise land of Ubaidians and Sumerians.

suggested it could lie in Mongolia or India or Ethiopia. They based their theories quite sensibly on the known antiquity of those regions, and on the notion that the mysterious Pison and Gihon were to be associated with those other two great rivers of the ancient world, the Nile and the Ganges.

Another favorite locale for the Garden had been Turkey, because both the Tigris and the Euphrates rise in the mountains there, and because Mount Ararat, where Noah's Ark came to rest, is there. In the past hundred years, since the discovery of ancient civilizations in modern Iraq, scholars have leaned toward the

Tigris-Euphrates valley in general, and to the sites of southern Sumer, about 150 miles north of the present head of the Persian Gulf, in particular (map, above).

To this southern Sumerian theory Dr. Juris Zarins, of Southwest Missouri State University in Springfield, would murmur: "You're getting warmer." For Dr. Zarins, who has spent seven years working out his own hypothesis, believes that the Garden of Eden lies presently under the waters of the Persian Gulf, and he further believes that the story of Adam and Eve in—and especially out—of the Garden is a highly condensed and evocative account of perhaps the greatest revolu-

tion that ever shook mankind: the shift from hunting-gathering to agriculture.

No single scholarly discipline will suffice to cover the long, intricate road Zarins has followed to arrive at his theory. He began, as many another researcher has, with the simple Biblical account, which "I read forward and backward, over and over again." To this he added the unfolding archaeology of Saudi Arabia (SMITHSONIAN, September 1983), where he spent his field time for more than a decade. Next he consulted the sciences of geology, hydrology and linguistics from a handful of brilliant 20th-century scholars and, finally, Space Age technology in the form of LANDSAT space images.

It is a tale of rich complexity, beginning 30 millennia before the birth of Christ. Of climatic shifts from moist to arid to moist, with consequent migrations eddying back and forth across, and up and down the Middle East. And of myriad peoples. There were hunter-gatherers whom agriculturalists displaced. There were prehistoric Ubaidians who built cities, Sumerians who invented writing and the Assyrians who absorbed Sumer's writing as well as its legend of a luxuriantly lovely land, an Eden called Dilmun. Finally, there were Kashshites in Mesopotamia, contemporaries of the Israelites then forming the state of Israel.

An endless search for food

There are two crucial if approximate dates in reconstruction. The first is about 30,000 B.C., with the transition from Neanderthal to modern Man. This, some anthropologists believe, took place along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean and Aegean seas and in Iraq. At that time the Great Ice Age still held most of Eurasia in its grip, and it caused the sea levels to fall by 400 feet so that what is now the Persian Gulf was dry land, all the way to the Strait of Hormuz. It was irrigated not only by the still-existing Tigris and Euphrates but also by the Gihon, the Pison and their tributaries from the Arabian peninsula and from Iran. It seems reasonable that technologically primitive but modern Man, in his endless search for food, would have located the considerable natural paradise that presented itself in the area where the Gulf now lies.

But Eden wasn't born then. That came, Zarins believes, about 6000 B.C. In between 30,000 and 6000 B.C., the climate varied. From 15,000 B.C., rainfall diminished drastically. Faced with increasing aridity, the Paleolithic population retreated, some as far as the area known to us as the "Fertile Crescent" (north along the Tigris and Euphrates, westward toward the moist Mediterranean coast, south to the Nile), and also eastward to the Indus River valley. Others, perhaps wearied by the long trek, made do with the more aus-



In 13th-century Italian mosaic, Noah releases dove from Ark, but raven finds evidence of receding waters.

tere conditions of central Arabia and continued foraging as best they could.

Then, at about 6000 to 5000 B.C., following a long arid stretch, came a period called the Neolithic Wet Phase when rains returned to the Gulf region. The reaches of eastern and northeastern Saudi Arabia and southwestern Iran became green and fertile again. Foraging populations came back to where the four rivers now ran full, and there was rainfall on the intervening plains. Animal bones indicate that in this period Arabia had abundant game. Thousands of stone tools suggest intensive, if seasonal, human occupation around now dry lakes and rivers. These tools are found even in the Rub al-Khali or Empty Quarter of Saudi Arabia. And so about 6000 to 5000 B.C. the land was again a paradise on Earth, provided by a bountiful nature—God—and admirably suited to the foraging life.

This time, however, there was a difference: agriculture had been invented. Not overnight—"It was a very gradual process, not an event," Zarins emphasizes. It grew up along the Mediterranean coast and in today's Iran and Iraq as groups of hunter-gatherers evolved into agriculturalists. Foragers from central Arabia, returning to the southern Mesopotamian plain, found it already resettled by these agriculturalists. Because the process occurred before writing was invented, there is no record of what upheavals the evolution caused, what tortured questions about traditional values and life-styles, what dislocations of clans or tribes. Zarins posits that it must have been far more dramatic than the infinitely later Industrial Revolution, and an earthquake in comparison with today's computer-age discombobulation of persons, professions and systems.

The author, a frequent contributor, met Dr. Zarins and his Eden theory when writing of Saudi archaeology (September 1983) and has followed his work since.



Assyrian relief of Gilgamesh, legendary god-king of Sumer; a serpent foiled his quest for eternal life.

"What would happen to a forager when his neighbors changed their ways or when he found agriculturalists had moved into his territory?" Zarins asks. "These agriculturalists were innovative folk who had settled down, planted seeds, domesticated and manipulated animals. They made the food come to them, in effect, instead of chasing it over hill and dale. What would the forager do if he couldn't cope? He could die; he could move on; he could join the agriculturalists. But whatever happened, he would resent it."

Eden, Adam and the birth of writing

The crunch came, Zarins believes, here in the Tigris and Euphrates valleys and in northern Arabia, where the hunter-gatherers, flooding in from less hospitable regions, were faced with more technically accomplished humans who knew how to breed and raise animals, who made distinctive pottery, who seemed inclined to cluster in settled groups. Who were these people? Zarins believes they were a southern Mesopotamian group and culture now called the Ubaid. They founded the oldest of the southern Mesopotamian cities, Eridu, about 5000 B.C. Though Eridu, and other cities like Ur and Uruk, were discovered a century ago, the Ubaidian presence down along the coast of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia has been known for little more than a decade, when vestiges of their settlements, graves and distinctive pottery turned up (p. 133).

It was in Saudi Arabia that Zarins encountered the Ubaidians, and there that he began developing his hypothesis about the true meaning of the Biblical Eden. One clue lies in linguistics: the term Eden, or Edin, appears first in Sumer, the Mesopotamian region that produced the world's first written language. This was in the third millennium B.C., more than three thousand years after the rise of the Ubaid culture. In Sumerian the word "Eden" meant simply "fertile plain." The word "Adam" also existed in cuneiform, meaning something like "settlement on the plain." Although both words were set down first in Sumerian, along with place names like Ur and Uruk, they are not Sumerian in origin. They are older. A brilliant Assyriologist named Benno Landsberger advanced the theory in 1943 that these names were all linguistic remnants of a pre-Sumerian people who had already named rivers, cities—and even some specific trades like potter and coppersmith—before the Sumerians appeared.

Landsberger called the pre-Sumerian language simply Proto-Euphratian. Other scholars suggest that its speakers were the Ubaidians. However it was, the existing names were incorporated into Sumerian and written down for the first time. And the mythology of a lush and lovely spot called Eden was codified by being written.

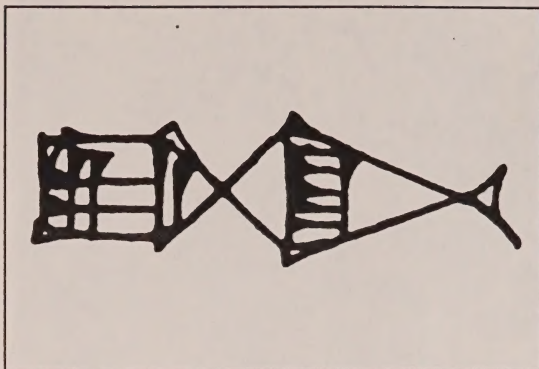
"The whole Garden of Eden story, however, when finally written, could be seen to represent the point of view of the hunter-gatherers," Zarins reasons. "It was the result of tension between the two groups, the collision of two ways of life. Adam and Eve were heirs to natural bounty. They had everything they needed. But they sinned and were expelled. How did they sin? By challenging God's very omnipotence. In so doing they represented the agriculturalists, the upstarts who insisted on taking matters into their own hands, relying upon their knowledge and their own skills rather than on His bounty.

"There were no journalists around to record the tension, no historians. But the event did not go unnoticed. It became a part of collective memory and at long last it was written down, highly condensed, in *Genesis*. It was very brief, but brevity doesn't mean lack of significance."

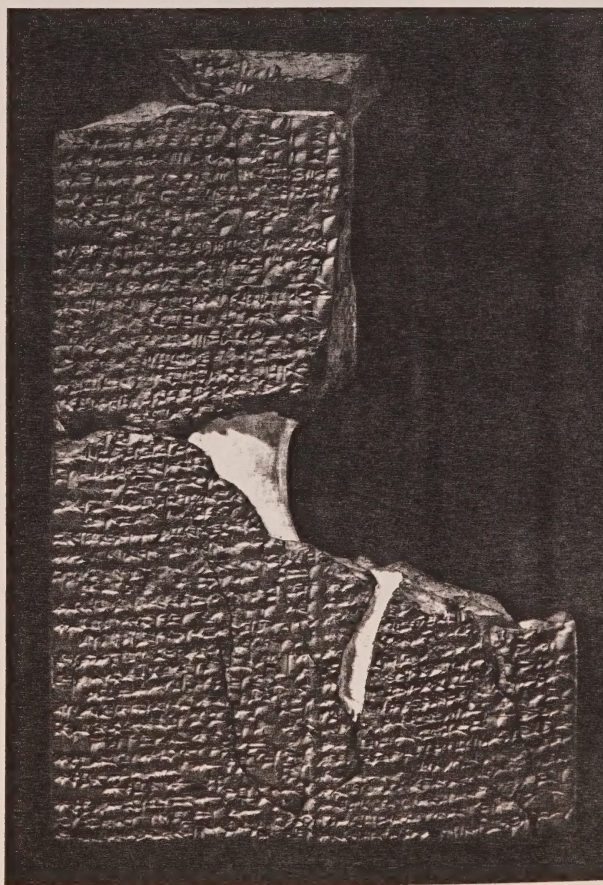
How did it happen that an advanced people would perpetuate a myth making their own ancestors the sinners? It may be that the Ubaidians, who are known to have sailed down the east coast of Arabia and colonized there, ran into descendants of foragers displaced from a drowning Eden, from them heard the awful story of the loss of paradise and repeated it until it became their own legend. Or it may be that, responding to the increasing pressures and stresses of a society growing in complexity, they found comfort in a fantasy of the good old days, when life had been sweeter, simpler, more idyllic. However, it was a tale firmly established in Ubaidian mythology, then adopted and recorded by the Sumerians.

LANDSAT spots a "fossil river"

At this stage in his thesis, Zarins goes back to geography and geology to pinpoint the area of Eden where he believes the collision came to a head. The evidence is beguiling: first, *Genesis* was written from a Hebrew point of view. It says the Garden was "eastward," i.e., east of Israel. It is quite specific about the rivers. The Tigris and the Euphrates are easy because they still flow. At the time *Genesis* was written, the Euphrates must have been the major one because it stands identified by name only and without an explanation about what it "compasseth." The Pison can be identified from the Biblical reference to the land of Havilah, which is easily located in the Biblical Table of Nations (*Genesis 10:7, 25:18*) as relating to localities and people within a Mesopotamian-Arabian framework. Supporting the Biblical evidence of Havilah are geological evidence on the ground and LANDSAT images from space. These images clearly show a "fossil river," that once flowed through northern Arabia and through the now dry beds, which modern Saudis and Kuwaitis



The word "Eden" was first written down in Sumerian cuneiform; there was a word for "Adam," but not "Eve."



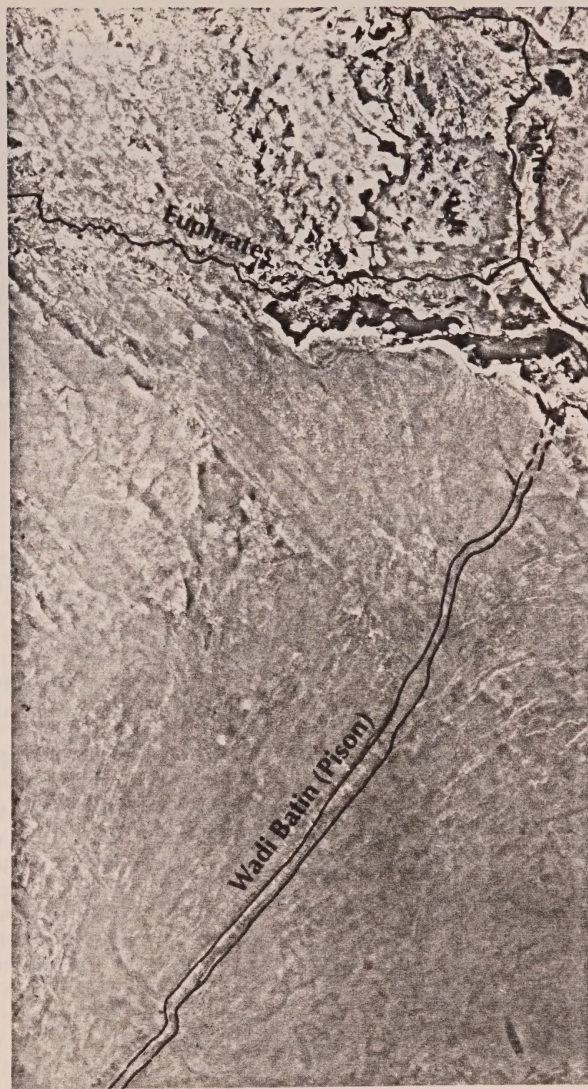
Sumerian story of Creation told how water god Enki directed his mother, Nammu, to form Man from clay.

know as the Wadi Rimah and the Wadi Batin. Furthermore, as the Bible says, this region was rich in bdellium, an aromatic gum resin that can still be found in north Arabia, and gold, which was still mined in the general area in the 1950s.

It is the Gihon, which "compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia," that has been the problem. In Hebrew the geographical reference was to "Cush" or "Kush." The translators of the King James Bible in the 17th century rendered Cush or Kush as "Ethiopia"—which is farther to the south and in Africa—thus upsetting the geographical appellation and flummoxing researchers for centuries. Zarins now believes the Gihon is the Karun River, which rises in Iran and flows southwestward toward the present Gulf. The Karun also shows in LANDSAT images and was a perennial river which, until it was dammed, contributed most of the sediment forming the delta at the head of the Persian Gulf.

Thus the Garden of Eden, on the geographical evidence, must have been somewhere at the head of the Gulf at a time when all four rivers joined and flowed through an area that was then above the level of the Gulf. The wording in *Genesis* that Eden's river "became into four heads" was dealt with by Biblical scholar Ephraim Speiser some years ago: the passage, he said, refers to the four rivers upstream of their confluence into the one river watering the Garden. This is a strange perspective, but understandable if one reflects that the description is of a folk memory, written millennia after the events encapsulated, by men who had never been within leagues of the territory.

It was Speiser again who suggested that the mysterious Cush or Kush should be correctly written as Kashshu and further that it refers to the Kashshites, a people who, in about 1500 B.C., conquered Mesopotamia and prevailed until about 900 B.C. This Zarins considers a vital clue.



LANDSAT image of head of Persian Gulf shows four rivers of the Bible. Tigris and Euphrates have never ceased flowing. The perennial Gihon has contributed

"At the time the Kashshites were in control in Mesopotamia, the nation of Israel was being formed. The Hebrews must certainly have encountered them, and learned the handed-down traditions of early Mesopotamia, the myths and tales. They must have heard the words Eden and Adam."

The name Eve does not appear in Sumerian but there is a most intriguing link—the account of Eve's having been fashioned from Adam's rib in the Gar-



heavily to delta sediments, causing the channel to shift periodically. Only the flood plain of fossil Pison is visible; sands and settlements filled its course.

den story. Why a rib? Well, in a famous Sumerian poem translated and analyzed by scholar Samuel Noah Kramer, there is an account of how Enki the water god angered the Mother Goddess Ninhursag by eating eight magical plants that she had created. The Mother Goddess put the curse of death on Enki and disappeared, presumably so she couldn't change her mind and relent. Later, however, when Enki became very ill and eight of his "organs" failed, Ninhursag was



Before discovery of these classical pottery sherds in 1968, Ubaid presence on east Saudi coast was unknown.

enticed back. She summoned eight healing deities, one for each ailing organ. Now the Sumerian word for "rib" is "ti," but the same word also means "to make live." So the healing deity who worked on Enki's rib was called "Nin-ti" and, in a nice play on words, became both the "lady of the rib" and the "lady who makes live." This Sumerian pun didn't translate into Hebrew, in which the words for "rib" and "to make live" are quite different. But the rib itself went into the Biblical account and as "Eve" came to symbolize the "mother of all living."

This and other ties with Sumerian myth are very clear, and Zarins finds it telling that although the Hebrews had close associations with Egypt, their earliest spiritual roots were in Mesopotamia. "Abraham journeyed to Egypt, Joseph journeyed to Egypt, the whole Exodus story is concerned with Egypt, but there is nothing whatever Egyptian about the early chapters of *Genesis*," he points out. "All these early accounts are linked to Mesopotamia. Abraham indeed is said to have come from Ur, at the time near the Gulf, and the writers of *Genesis* wanted to link up with that history. So they drew from the literary sources of the greatest civilization that had existed, and that was in Mesopotamia. In so doing they turned Eden into the Garden, Adam into a man, and a compacted history of things that occurred millennia before was pressed into a few chapters."

Long before *Genesis* was written, Zarins believes, the physical Eden had vanished under the waters of the Gulf. Man had lived happily there. But then, about 5000 to 4000 B.C. came a worldwide phenomenon called the Flandrian Transgression, which caused a sudden rise in sea level. The Gulf began to fill with water and actually reached its modern-day level about 4000 B.C., having swallowed Eden and all the settlements along

the coastline of the Gulf. But it didn't stop there. It kept right on rising, moving upward into the southern regions of today's Iraq and Iran.

"The Sumerians always claimed that their ancestors came 'out of the sea,' and I believe they literally did," says Zarins. "They retreated northward into Mesopotamia from the encroaching waters of the Gulf, where they had lived for thousands of years."

Their original "Eden" was gone but a new one called Dilmun, on higher ground along the eastern coast of Arabia, enters the epics and the poems in the third millennium B.C. The by then ancient mythology of a land of plenty, of eternal life and peace, had lodged firmly in the collective mind and in a specific geographical area.

The scholarly world first heard about Dilmun a little more than a century ago, when scholars were able to decipher cuneiform tablets unearthed by archaeologist Austen Henry Layard in Nineveh, an Assyrian stronghold in today's Iraq. Its earliest mention was in economic texts referring to traffic in people and goods. On later tablets, to their astonishment, scholars began reading, in literature, not only about Eden and Adam and the "lady of the rib" but also about a Great Flood, and a Sumerian hero called Gilgamesh and his search for the Tree of Life. There was even a serpent.

Gilgamesh had gone "down" from Sumer to the Gulf area where he had been told he would find a plant that would give him eternal life. "What he found may have been coral, which in antiquity was a symbol of eternal life," Zarins explains. "And after his labors he went to sleep and a serpent came along and stole his eternal life—his coral, maybe. Now it may not have been a serpent as we think of one, but instead one of those beautiful feathery creatures that Assyrians depicted in reliefs. But the descriptions of Dilmun are of an area that fits what I've been saying, where societies could exist at the will and bounty of God, in a beautiful setting."

A land for commerce and consecration

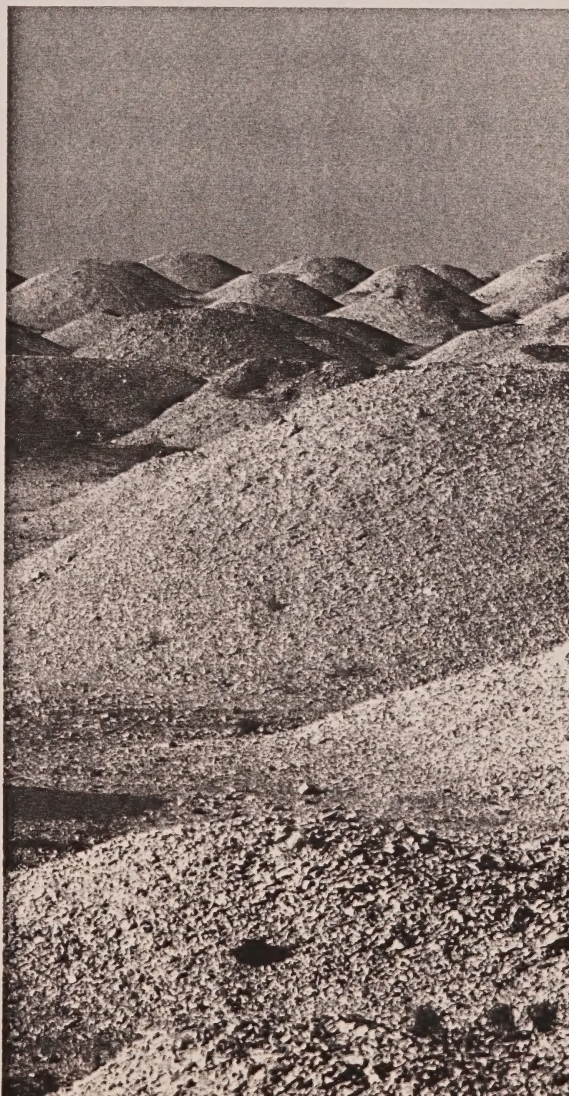
There is a curious dichotomy in Dilmun as economic center and also as hallowed place of legend. Its exact location has been a debated issue. It is Zarins'—and most scholars'—conviction that it was the islands of Bahrain and Failaka and the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia. "The island of Bahrain was the Hong Kong of its era," he says, "a rich hub of international trade, with ships coming and going between Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley civilization. Both there and on the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia are tens of thousands of tumuli—far more than the sparse indigenous population would have accounted for—some very rich tombs, most dating to the period 2500 to 1900 B.C.

Some suggest close ties with the Sumerians. Eden was gone so they would want to go to the paradise land of Dilmun either for pilgrimages or as the site of their final resting place. After all, if riches or eternal life were to be had in this area, they might as well get in on it."

One final question must be asked. Why, when the Israelites accepted the ancient stories of Mesopotamia-Arabia, with all their freight of long-forgotten struggles, climatic changes, half-forgotten traditions, did they choose the word Eden instead of Dilmun?

"Perhaps they never heard of the word Dilmun,"

Undulating sea of Bahrain burial mounds, world's largest prehistoric cemetery, dates from Dilmun era.



says Zarins. "We don't really know. Archaeologist Daniel Potts is working on that problem right now: Did the word Dilmun exist in Hellenistic times? There was a linguistic break in Alexander the Great's time. The wedgelike cuneiform was replaced by the alphabetic writing of the Greeks, a much more efficient system. Power passed from the East to the West, to Greece and Rome. The old stories, the old words, faded into obscurity because power goes to those who have it. Until the discovery of the Nineveh tablets, Assyrian cuneiform was dead. Early translators never heard of it.

The name and concept of Eden were transmitted not through the Sumerian language of Dilmun but through the Hebrew-Hellenistic one of Eden."

It is an accident of history, of archaeology, of translation, perhaps, that Dilmun was lost and Eden remained. It should not shake the faith of any intelligent human being. If Zarins is correct, there is embedded in the Bible a very ancient folk memory, not only the story of Creation but also the story of Man's emergence from total dependence to perilous self-reliance, with all the man-made dangers incipient therein.

It is thought the Sumerians may have brought their dead to this holy place, the paradise land of legend.



Marge

"TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE
DIACONATE IN THE
UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES"

Reverend Nancy L. Wilson

Los Angeles, California

August 1, 1980

INTRODUCTION OF THESIS

The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (U.F.M.C.C.) was founded in 1968, as a Christian Church for all people with a special ministry to the gay community. In our Fellowship By-Laws, (Attachment No. 1) we state that we recognize an order of lay ministry, the diaconate. The description and the reality of that office reflects the eclectic ecclesiology of the U.F.M.C.C. The role of the Deacon in M.C.C. has never been thoroughly examined or explored; it has merely been assumed. Behind this problem lies the fact that our Church has not systematically examined either its ecclesiology or its theology of ministry in depth; rather, we have attempted to live out our individual perceptions of what M.C.C. is. We now have two commissions (Government, Structures and Systems; and Faith, Fellowship and Order) which are trying to get M.C.C. people to discuss and come to some consensus about important theological/practical issues. Part of the reason for our previous neglect of these tasks is the fact that we are so new, and the urgency of the work we are doing, locally and Fellowship-wide, seems to leave no time for the "luxury" of a thorough thinking-through of such matters. Also, I suspect that some of us are afraid we'll really find out what others of us really think!!!

Churches complain of not knowing how to train deacons, mostly, I suspect, because no one is quite sure what they are. The purpose of my project has been to come up with a tentative, working definition of the diaconate in M.C.C. My method consisted of: 1) research on the history of the diaconate in the Christian Church; 2) research on contemporary ecclesiology and theologies of ministry (particularly from the viewpoint of Liberation Theology) as they impinge on the diaconate; 3) reporting the results of a survey I designed and compiled for those in M.C.C. involved with the diaconate; 4) finding within M.C.C. documents the basis for a theology of ministry and ecclesiology that could help define the diaconate for M.C.C.; 5) the implementation of a training program for deacons in a local M.C.C. church which involved the trainees in developing an authentic definition of the diaconate for themselves and 6) the evaluation of that program and final conclusions and recommendations to the U.F.M.C.C. concerning the future of the diaconate.

CHAPTER 1

A Brief Overview of the Diaconate in Christian History

The word "deacon" is derived from the Greek word "diakonos." That word, in its first century usage meant "one who waits on tables;" "servant;" or "lackey."¹ In the New Testament, it is used in the Gospels in that sense, and by Jesus as a metaphor for ministry (Luke 22:27; Matthew 20:26-28). The New Testament writers use the term to describe Jesus' model of ministry (Philippians 2:7; Acts 3:13; 26; 4:27, 30; Romans 15:8). Also, "diakonos" becomes, in the New Testament, a general term for service or ministry.² This New Testament understanding pre-dates the development of a monarchical episcopate in the Church in which the diaconate became a stepping stone to priesthood.

Edward Echlin, in his book, *The Deacon in the Church*, also claims a strong connection between the Greek word "leiturgia" (translated "the work of the people," from which we derive our word "liturgy") and "diakonia."³ This connection originates in the Levite tradition of the post exilic Jews. Echlin claims that there is a connection between the "leiturgia" of the levitical assistants to priests in the temple (as doorkeepers, custodians of the sacred vessels, Deut. 14:26-29; 2 Samuel 6:9) and the "diakonia" of waiting on tables (1 Cor. 11; James 1:27).⁴ There seems to be a consistent tension between the cultic and service connotations of the word "diakonos," and consequently the term deacon.

The actual history of the office of deacon in the Church is more complicated. Harry Boer, in *A Short History of the Early Church*, says, quite bluntly, "When and how the office of deacon originated is not known."⁵ On the face of it, that isn't very encouraging. The fact is that the New Testament does not speak of a uniform ecclesiology of theology of ministry (they had the same problem that M.C.C. now faces!!). There are models and metaphors and references to charisms, gifts, offices, titles and disagreements about them, but no clearly revealed or "ordained" structure. Edward Schweizer speaks of this in his book, *Church Order in the New Testament*, in relationship to the ecclesiology of Luke-Acts:

"This almost casual mention of special office bearers in the Church, and the absence of definite titles, show that the order of these forms is not fundamental to the Lucan Church . . . very diverse forms, monarchical, oligarchical and democratic elements standing side by side." (p. 90)

Even Paul, Schewizer says, referring to the Church as the Body of Christ, speaks of many gifts and tasks, but no one order or system.⁶

There are only two New Testament passages which have been traditionally understood to speak of the origin or purpose of the diaconate: Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. There are problems with both these texts.

First of all, Acts 6:1-6 does not claim to tell the story of the origin of the diaconate, although it has been interpreted that way since Irenaeus made the connection.⁷ Scholars have debated the precise meaning of Acts 6:1-6. The story does not use the noun for deacon and it seems to "represent the rise of a Hellenistic office to counter Jewish control of the Church - a Hellenistic Seven to parallel the Jewish Twelve."⁸ Other scholars believe that the conflict was between Hellenistic Jews and Palestinian Jews (both Christians).⁹ Harry Boer sees this as the origin of elders (p. 23). The Acts passage is interesting in that the seven are elected, and there seems to be an acknowledgment of a need for persons to be set aside for the caring for human needs (feeding the poor). Certainly the event in Acts 6 is a precursor to the development of a Church office. However, at this stage, it seems to be a local matter, for local needs, not Church-wide. It is indigenous and spontaneous, not yet institutionalized. One must also remember that the Book of Acts is an idealized (and in this section, second-hand) account of Church origins. It is not at all clear that Luke intends for us to read this story as the story of the "first deacons."

1 Timothy is one of the pastoral epistles, whose authorship is questioned. The problem with 1 Timothy is its date. By the time 1 Timothy 3:8-13 was written, the office of deacon as a Church-wide office is assumed. By the time of the writing of the pastoral epistles, there has clearly been a major shift towards a hierarchical ecclesiology in a post-apostolic age. The Church apparently began with a fluid sense of Church order - with apostles, teachers, elders, prophets, etc. Gradually, however, the Church moved from this charismatic/servanthood style (not consistently ordered) to a monarchical episcopate.¹⁰ The reasons are probably many: the perceived need for "tightening control" in the face of persecution and "heresy;" the delay of the parousia, and the corresponding need for continuity in being faithful to the apostolic witness; and possibly the development of sacramentalism in which "great concern is focused on appointing guardians of the sacrament."¹¹ 1 Timothy is a product of this shift, and gives us no clues about the origins of the diaconate per se.

What do we know about this office of deacon which apparently emerges late in the first century?

From the writings of Bishop Ignatius of Antioch (our first clear picture of a monarchical bishop)¹² we are told that the deacon is a "special friend" to the Bishop.¹³ The deacon often functioned as the bishop's assistant, counselor, administrative aide and cultic servant, paralleling the temple tradition.¹⁴ During this period (the early second century) the Bishop was still the head of a local Church, not a large diocese. So, in a sense, the deacon was a "pastoral assistant." According to the *Didache* (the first known church manual/sacramentary, from the early second century) deacons were 1) not to be greedy, 2) to be appointed/ordained according to the needs and size of a congregation and 3) to be special ministers of the Eucharist.¹⁵ Further:

"... the deacon must be ready for whatever the Bishop directs. He may receive the contributions of the faithful, though passing them on at once to the bishop, and should minister devotedly to the sick and infirm, if necessary laying down his life for the brethren (sic)."¹⁶

Deacons are reported to have been active, in the early Church, in the ministries of the sacraments, word and charity.¹⁷ Sometimes they served as mediators of disputes, in listening to people's needs and complaints (the "eyes and ears of the bishop.")¹⁸ Deacons preached, taught and consoled. They were the doorkeepers at the liturgy (watching for persecutors, escorting the catechumens out of the sanctuary before Holy Communion).¹⁹

In the East, deacons were the "heralds" of the church in worship (possibly akin to being a "master of ceremonies," or the "liturgist" as we often say). The deacon in the East was responsible to lead the "bidding" prayers (community prayers) during worship.²⁰

The "Golden Age" of the diaconate really occurred during the latter days of persecution and the post-Nicene missionary age of the early church.²¹ During that time, bishops were frequently traveling, in prison, or hiding out. There were not enough bishops or priests to meet the pastoral and missionary needs of the early church. Deacons were needed to fill in, to function as pastors and missionaries.²² Deacons preached until the late 5th century²³ and were oftentimes functioning as the "managers of the community,"²⁴ possibly comparable to the "parish administrator" of contemporary American Catholic Churches. They developed comprehensive (for those times) social services in Rome²⁵ and an archdeacon (assistant to the Pope) actually became Pope without first being made a priest.²⁶

What happened to change the role of the deacon? Apparently, as the needs of the church began to change in the post-apostolic age, and with the rise of "sacerdotalism" the role of the deacon came into question. The Bishop/deacon relationship was essentially Hellenistic in origin, while the office of presbyter (elder or "priest") was of Jewish origin. Bishops were elders also²⁷, and these offices began co-existing. It becomes clear that priests who were not Bishops resented the "special friend" and seemingly privileged role of the deacon, believing that this should be reserved for the priest. There was resistance to the idea of a deacon being able to "fill in" for the Bishop or a priest. It was the viewpoint of the priests that there should be a strict ascending hierarchy of deacon-presbyter-bishop, and no permanent diaconate. Their viewpoint eventually won out, especially as the need for deacons to "fill in" declined.²⁸

One of the reasons for the decline in that need was the rise of monasticism, which captured the imagination of those attracted to the servanthood style of ministry. In many ways, one might say that the monastic movement took the place of the diaconate in acts of service, teaching and charity.²⁹ The end result was that the diaconate suffered as the institutionalization of the Church solidified, and it was trivialized into becoming only a ceremonial cultic role (assisting with the Eucharist), a temporary stepping stone to the priesthood. The permanent diaconate simply withered until: "On the eve of the Reformation . . . his (the deacon's) was a preliminary albeit ascending grade in a pseudo-Dionysian hierarchy."³⁰ The Church had largely adopted the hierarchal model of the Roman Empire for Church government.

One of the cornerstones of the Reformation was the recognition of the incompatibility of this model with the New Testament and for the needs of the people. Calvin, in particular, sought to reorganize the Church in order (in his opinion) to bring it into conformity with what he perceived as a "pre-Dionysian" and "pre-hierarchal" New Testament order. The problem is, of course, that Calvin *inferred* a church order, or read it into the New Testament. In any case, Calvin attempted to restore the diaconate, not so much to have it as part of the clerical hierarchy, but as a lay office, as managers of the temporal affairs of the church.³¹ In addition, "Calvin attempted to restore the office of deacon to its original function (relief of human need). In Geneva, they took over the care of the poor, the needy and distressed, including the sick (hospitals)."³² By "original function" Thompson is referring to Acts 6, and the assumption that that passage is the basis of the diaconate, an assumption I have questioned.

In any case, the Reformation brought with it a revival of the diaconate, taking many forms. Below is a brief list of the current practices in several mainline denominations:

Baptist: Deacons are elected by the congregation, not ordained, care for the spiritual life of the congregation, help the needy, assist in administration of baptism and Lord's Supper, discipline of careless Church members. Trustees handle finances.

Episcopal: The Bishop ordains men and women to the office of deacon, a step to the priesthood, help the priest with worship, especially Holy Communion; also seek out and serve the poor. *Perpetual Deacons:* ordained, assist at communion, teaching and caring for the sick and needy and indigent. Deacons are subject to the Bishop and must pass an examination on a course of study. There have been deaconesses, but these were religious orders, fading away with the advent of women's ordination.

Methodist: The office of deacon is the first stage on the way to ordination as an elder, usually occurs at the end of the first year of seminary, it is itself an ordained office, open to women and men. Works of charity are carried out by the Women's Society of Christian Service.

Presbyterian: Deacons are responsible to the Session yet called forth by the congregation, not seminary trained, yet ordained to this special task, flexible but concerned with broad spectrum of human needs, i.e., social justice matters, ministry to special groups within a community. They may or may not assist in the serving of communion. Includes women.

Roman Catholic: One of three minor orders, ordained, in the course of preparation for the priesthood. They are celibate in the Roman Rite. However, one of the most interesting developments has been the revival of the permanent diaconate in the post-Vatican II Church, in response to local needs for pastoral ministry. There has been discussion of and now use of married deacons (males), after a course of study and preparation they are ordained; to function permanently to preach, baptize, marry, but not say mass.

United Church of Christ: Differing definitions in different conferences; open to women and men; called by local congregation. Help pastor prepare people for baptism, confirmation, church membership, death and burial; prepare and distribute Holy Communion; being sensitive and responsive to local church needs.³³

In the next chapter, I will examine some questions arising from this overview.

Healons.

Scheduling

Here

Sun.

Scholarships GLAD ✓

Follow up on people

Kathy & Lisa - Eddie

Ask Hail abt Preaching
at Tues. 5/19???

Conf. Marge

Cal

Peg

Shirley

Kay

Peg starts massage therapy school
Sept 1996

Call Civil Defense identify safest place.

{ ~~Remedial Bible Study~~ ^{Forums?} - 5³⁰ Sun Eve.
Serendipity -

Brenda Seales moved & daughter - Remlap

Leroy & Freda Hardis

6 new member tucaloosa (13) abuse int in diacovate

2 new members transferred (15) please put in discussion

Heavy + Fresh Air

Brown shoes worn & changed - 10000

~~Remain in the group~~ - 25000
- 25000

will refer identity report please.

for this message identity report
1992

Conf. Mass.
Cal.
Pop.
Heavy
Heavy

Relationships: CAD ✓
Relationships: people
Relationships - Eddie

Relationship
Heavy
Heavy

Can this be preserved
at time. 2/18/92

Heavy